



STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

Brater Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor)
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SEN. BRATER CALLS FOR IMPROVED VOTER ACCESS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS **Provides tips for participating in Election 2004**

“We must encourage people to vote,” Brater says.

ANN ARBOR MI – In separate announcements on the campuses of the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University, Sen. Liz Brater today announced legislation amending the restrictive current laws that prevent students from voting in campus precincts unless both their drivers’ licenses and voters registration cards indicate the same permanent residence. Under a law passed in 2000, citizens’ addresses on driver’s licenses and voter registration must agree, making voting more difficult for thousands of college students living away from home. Brater was joined by Jennifer Nathan, Vice President, University of Michigan Student Assembly.

“The current law disenfranchises thousands of college students living on college campuses and makes it harder for them to participate in elections,” Brater said. “We should be doing everything we can to encourage young people to participate in the election process. To place roadblocks in their way is wrong.”

Brater also announced that she was introducing legislation to allow Michigan citizens to vote by mail without stating a reason. “The current absentee ballot application discourages people from voting by mail,” Brater said. “This is a problem for people who are working long days, have young children at home, or have trouble getting to the polls for reasons other than those listed on the absentee ballot application. We need to make it easier for people to vote.”

Brater’s announcement was echoed by colleagues across the state. Democratic Floor Leader Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) joined Brater at the event. Sen. Virgil Bernero (D-Lansing), who is sponsoring part of the package, hosted a similar event at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

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“College students today are motivated and empowered to participate in November's election and we should be encouraging their enthusiasm by making the process easier, not difficult and prohibitive,” Nathan said. “The legislation proposed by Senators Brater and Bernero takes a vital step in restoring crucial voting rights to Michigan college students.”

Sen. Brater also criticized a current Michigan law that requires first-time voters to register in person in their home districts in order to receive absentee ballots, a requirement that has heavy impact on students, since many are first-time voters.

In addition, Brater provided printed handouts for students to help them overcome administrative obstacles that currently complicate their access to voting.

“Because of issues like the war in Iraq and efforts like Rock the Vote, we are seeing a tremendous increase in student interest and involvement during this election year,” Brater said. “We cannot allow this group to be discouraged or shut out in any way from the process. Their votes must be encouraged and their voices equally heard.”

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State Senator Brater represents Senate District 18 which includes the cities of Ann Arbor, Chelsea, and Ypsilanti, the Villages of Barton Hills and Dexter, and the following townships: Ann Arbor, Augusta, Freedom, Lima, Lyndon, Northfield, Salem, Scio, Sharon, Superior, Sylvan, Webster and Ypsilanti. She is the minority vice chair of the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee and the Agriculture, Forestry, and Tourism Committee.